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ATHLETES.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

WITHIN the past few years, public interest has been manifested from time to time in fitful outbursts concerning the welfare of those who follow the calling of acrobats or gymnasts; and a storm of natural indignation was evoked not long ago by some shocking disclosures of barbarous ill-treatment revealed by four or five English boys, who were rescued from the custody of a brutal old Arab trainer of contortionists in Constantinople, to whose tender mercies they had been confided under the guise of apprenticeship—to put it plainly, sold—by their parents. That such agitation is wholesome and desirable from every point of view, no one could wish to deny. Nevertheless, much popular misconception seems to exist with regard to this subject, more especially as to the condition of the children, the wretched little 'white slaves' of sensational newspaper articles, who are brought up to the acrobatic business; the existence of this misconception being borne out by the tenor of certain proposed legislative enactments which, if carried, will affect the members of this profession to no inconsiderable extent. Some details of the education and routine of this curious class both before and behind the scenes, gleaned by diligent inquiry amongst the representatives of its different departments, may therefore not be out of place just now.

Since it was only reasonable to suppose that, in their replies, the performers themselves might be tempted to present a one-sided aspect of the case, others—such as their agents and employers—who, while intimately connected with them in all matters of *technique*, possess somewhat antagonistic interests, were questioned as to the accuracy of the statements made, in order to obtain a corrective bias; and the results herein epitomised may be accepted as the average of both sources of information, though in reality there were but few discrepancies. He who has taken

the liberty of constituting himself a special commissioner on behalf of the readers of this *Journal* is a medical man, and can report from personal examination on the physical state of nearly two score juveniles, engaged in acrobatic performance on the stage at this time, or in course of training preparatory to exhibition.

It is a fact not generally known that the 'profession' is divided into two distinct branches, each comprising many 'lines' and specialties—*gymnasts*, those who display feats in mid-air, as trapeze-flying, ceiling-walking, and exercises on lofty bars or rings; and *acrobats*, who practise tumbling upon or in closer proximity to mother-earth. Having mentioned this, to avoid ambiguity in after-descriptions, let us now proceed to trace the athlete's career from its very beginning. An acrobat or gymnast wants a pupil, either to assist in his own tricks, or to educate and farm with an eye to profit in the future. Whatever the object may be, and whatever the line of business into which the young idea is destined to shoot, the trainer looks about him for a boy of seven years old. Seven or eight appears to be the age which all unanimously agree upon as the most suitable for commencement; older children are not considered unfit for the purpose—indeed, some who are now before the public have begun to learn at double that age—but younger are as a rule refused, 'because their muscles are not properly fixed yet.' If cases of training under seven years exist, they are undoubtedly very rare. Nor is there any scientific discrimination required in the selection of a fitting subject. The trainer does not seek for special points of natural aptitude in making his choice of an embryo athlete. Any youth of the appropriate age, provided he be free from bodily ailment or deformity, is regarded as capable of being developed into a *Leotard*, *Blondin*, or *Grimaldi*. If two boys, equal in other respects, were to present themselves as candidates, the smaller or better-looking of the twain might receive preference; but I could hear of no healthy boy ever proving absolutely unfit for the work.

But where is the pupil to be obtained? The trainer may, of course, have sons of his own, or the children of other entertainers may be submitted to him; and it occasionally happens that the workpeople about a theatre or music-hall bring their boys to be taught; but in the great majority of cases he has to pick up some poor little shoeless ragamuffin in the streets. Some vague formality of apprenticeship—not legally worth the paper on which it is written—is generally gone through with the relatives, whereby the master undertakes to feed and clothe the boy for seven years in return for the exclusive control of his services during that period; and the neophyte enters upon his course of study forthwith. The trainer's first and chief endeavour is to work up the muscular strength to as great a pitch as possible. With this end in view, the boy is fed well on an abundant and nourishing diet; and it may here be mentioned that acrobats disclaim any restriction to or rejection of special articles of food, either for themselves or their pupils, according to the practice that one usually associates with the idea of athletic training. They do not, as might be expected, perform entirely fasting, nor immediately after a heavy meal; but they live much as other people do, being, perforce of circumstances, exceedingly temperate in their use of alcohol and tobacco. The boy is made to take long walks, cold baths, to use the dumb-bells, and to go through invigorating but not excessive exercises on an ordinary gymnasium of ladders, ropes, and bars, such as any schoolboy might disport himself upon. An extraordinary belief prevails that it is customary to rub oil into the joints and to sleep in greased blankets, in order to insure pliancy of the limbs—a most groundless fallacy, since oil, though it may soften the skin, can never reach the tissues beneath.

This kind of treatment is pursued for two or three months without any attempt at 'tying the body into knots' or effecting difficult feats; but the practice of certain attitudes dependent upon flexibility of the articulations is encouraged out of school-hours, so to speak, by the promise of small rewards—not as part of the regular course. A famous 'Risley' performer, who is noted as a skilful educator of boys for the business, has a regular tariff of these rewards, and always leaves the means by which they are gained to the pupils themselves—so much for a certain flexure of the back, so much for the first hand-spring, &c. 'Sixpence for the splits,' he told me—'doing the splits' is the suggestive technicality for separating the legs until they extend at right angles to the body, which is thus lowered to the ground—'sixpence for the splits; and I never knew any boy yet who didn't get the money in three weeks from the day he began to try!' The little fellows like the fun of the thing; and the spirit of rivalry, where several train together, is very conducive to their rapid acquirement of tricks. They measure their progress inch by inch day by day, and every one is eager to proclaim his own as the 'biggest on record,' when comparisons are made. It is frequently found, therefore, at the end of three months that they are already fit to be taken before an audience, though their practice of regular feats has really not yet commenced. For instance, if a boy could do nothing but the splits,

that in itself would be something; but by lying flat and clasping the extended feet with his hands, he becomes a 'pancake,' and without any further effort on his own part might be tossed and twirled about by a man in half-a-dozen different tricks. The first thing the master teaches him is *how to fall*—how to save himself from injury if he 'misses his tip;' and as the dexterity displayed in the evolutions is merely an exaggeration of normal suppleness and agility, and does not depend on morbid dislocations, so this marvellous skill in falling without injury is only a high development of that instinct of self-preservation which makes us all put out our hands when we trip headlong, or throw them up mechanically to ward off a threatened blow. You may stand upon a chair and take a little acrobat up in your arms, and pitch him down on the floor in any position you please, without warning, and he will always, with no apparent effort, contrive that the brunt of the collision shall be borne by his hands or feet.

It is alleged that great cruelty and harshness are systematically exercised towards the children by their trainers, and that the case of the Arab Ben Muhammed is no exceptional one. To get definite evidence on a point like this is obviously a difficult matter. No doubt there are bad as well as good masters, and, it must be remembered, bad as well as good pupils. No doubt the boys are often virtually sold for money by their natural guardians, and they may sometimes be punished over their tasks, with or without cause. But, looking at the source from which they are usually derived, and the absence of any influence of moral obligation which the bringing-up of a street-urchin argues, it seems certain that if they were not well treated and did not like the business, they would simply run away again.

As to what may be called severity of professional discipline—bodily pain inflicted in the course of training—I cannot believe that such can obtain as a rule. All those gymnasts and acrobats whose opinion concerning Ben Muhammed was asked, merely said that he could not have understood his business, to attempt to *force* the unprepared bodies of his apprentices into attitudes attained by finished artists; and, speaking from a surgical point of view, I must say that I am disposed to fully agree with them. If you overstrain a tendon or sprain a joint, what is the consequence? Swelling, inflammation, loss of power, and acute tenderness. Suppose, instead of giving the part the perfect and prolonged rest which it will probably require for its complete recovery, you renew the action which caused the injury, most likely you will set up mischief which will impair the utility of the member for life, and possibly endanger life itself; for joints are bits of vital apparatus not to be trifled with. Under the most favourable circumstances, the strength and flexibility of the part will certainly not be increased, even after all pain and symptoms of injury have passed away. What, then, can be the *rationale* of endeavouring to establish such a condition by those means? Two or three years ago, a celebrated ballet-dancer ruptured a tiny muscular fibre in the region of the ankle while practising some complicated step or pirouette; inflammation ensued; she was obliged to forego her engagement; and certificates from the surgeons in

attendance on her were posted in the theatre, for the satisfaction of the public. The ankle-joint became permanently stiffened, and she will never be able to dance again. No child or adult whom I examined showed any trace whatever of injury, nor could I discover any diseases incidental to their mode of life. If an accident ever occurred to a child in the process of training, I was not likely to be informed of it; but I am bound to believe that serious accidents are extremely rare, from the precautions taken and the judicious graduation of instruction.

An acrobat is one who unites the muscularity of a powerful man with the suppleness of a baby. When we see how lightly they jump over each other's shoulders, we are apt to forget that the same amount of force is required to propel their bodies to that height as would be necessary to enable anybody else of similar weight to take such a leap, and that in the seeming ease and lightness lies the whole art of the thing. No greater error can be imagined than that of the notion which assumes a professional tumbler to be a nerveless, boneless individual, bendable in any direction by reason of his very flabbiness. Without exceptional strength, the acrobat or gymnast is nothing. I can say without hesitation that all those who have come under my observation are men or boys physically fitted, according to their age, for any occupation under the sun. The flexibility is literally retained rather than acquired. Look how a child rolls and falls about with its limbs bent under it in all sorts of positions, any approach to which would fracture and dislocate our grown-up bones. Its ligaments are more elastic, and the capsules of its joints more extensible, than ours; and it is this and analogous conditions which the acrobat maintains by constant usage. He, like the poet, is born, not made; but there is this great difference—that while the advent of a poet is the most infrequent of mundane affairs, we are all born acrobats. If you, grave and courteous reader, and I had only taken the trouble to preserve the plasticity with which we were endowed years ago, we might now 'come out' in a great Aerial Act as the Spangled Sprites of Spitzbergen. In fact, as my 'Risley' friend pointed out to me, we none of us know, even at this date, what we can do in that way until we try, or are forced to do without trying; and many a man has found himself much nearer 'doing the splits' on the ice or skating-rink than he would have believed possible.

To return to our youthful athlete, whom we left still in his apprenticeship to the art. By the time he reaches the age of twelve or thirteen, the trainer often deems it advisable to give him a salary, though his term of years as an apprentice may not have expired. Naturally, the master contrives, if possible, to teach him only such business as can be performed with his sole co-operation; but a well-practised boy of twelve or fourteen, especially if he be small and strong, would be very useful to a performer or troupe in any branch of the profession, so that his mentor finds it policy to make sure of his services by the payment of wages in addition to his maintenance—perhaps a pound a week, or even more in some cases. When the time is up, a regular legal compact of engagement may be entered into—

either for the duration of a tour, or for a certain number of years, or a contract of partnership; or the fledgling may start on his own account, and Professor So-and-so falls back on his reserve stock of 'sons,' who, to the public, never grow any older. Although most likely accustomed to exhibit in one line of performance only, the boy will by this time have learned many other feats for himself, through being constantly brought into contact with other specialists and having opportunities of using their apparatus on his travels; in after-life, therefore, he may adopt an entirely different branch from that in which he was educated, according to the demands of the market. Once thoroughly grounded in the alphabet of his business—the forward-long-swings, backward-long-swings, and houghs-off of the gymnast, and the lion's-leap, flip-flap, spread-eagle, somersaults, fore-, back-, and hand-springs of the acrobat—he is like one well established in the three Rs, and may take up anything with a prospect of success.

Very few quit this mode of life until compelled to do so by age; and it is impossible to lay down any limit for this. Until quite recently, three famous pantomimists, representing three generations—grandfather, father, and son—were in the habit of appearing together at a London theatre, and were noted for the marvellous agility of their 'Phantom' effects, manœuvres involving the very acme of both the acrobatic and gymnastic arts. My 'Risley' informant, also, was a man of sixty-two, and although he declared that he had 'had nearly enough of it,' he had just signed acceptance of an engagement for himself and his two pupils for the winter season at St Petersburg, and was in treaty with a circus-proprietor about a trip to India and Australia afterwards.

This Risley performance is so called, I was given to understand, after one Richard of that ilk, 'old Dick Risley,' who first introduced it. It seems to be very popular just now, being of what is termed a drawing-room character, and—since it involves no elaborate mechanism—is suitable for private fêtes or entertainments. The absence of danger, as well as the dexterity and confidence of the children who take part in it, make it a more pleasing exhibition than many displays of fancy athletics. The adult performer lies on his back, and, elevating his legs in the air, tosses about his boys—generally two in number—on the soles of his feet. To him, obviously, an experienced boy of light weight and good muscle is of the greatest use; but he has the advantage of being able to do a great deal with a perfect novice, as soon as the child loses its fear, and can trust him sufficiently to lie like a log while it is spun and twisted about, and made to turn somersaults and go through all manner of antics apparently by its own activity. The precision at which these people arrive is something wonderful.

There is a trio of 'brothers' who have been before the public in all parts of the world for some years, the eldest being a permanence, so to speak, and the two little ones, of course, variable; these are extremely clever exponents of the Risley speciality, and have introduced some startling novelties into it. Their 'Column of Tubs' illustrates, perhaps better than any other feat which can be quoted, the exactitude with which their

movements are timed and the amount of practice necessary to attain such a degree. One of the boys stands upon the upturned feet of the man. A tub, or circular box, is then interposed, upon which he climbs; a second tub is then inserted beneath this, and a third beneath that; and so on, until the man balances a pile of twenty upon his feet, and the youngster on the topmost one almost touches the upper border of the proscenium. When the column is complete, and the boy has stood upon his head or hands, and turned himself inside out a few times in that elevated situation, at a given signal he springs into the air; the man kicks away the pile of tubs, sending them over the stage with a deafening crash and clatter; and the boy, turning over and over in his descent, alights standing on the feet which are ready to receive him, sole to sole! They use resin to prevent the feet from slipping, as trapezists—who are usually marked with four large galls in each palm, characteristically arranged in the form of a square—do for their hands.

The latter performers also display marvellous precision in arranging their evolutions to chime in with one another. One will swing from his perch, fly up and seize a bar, turn round and round upon it a given number of times, holding by the legs alone; perform the 'houghs off and catch' just in time to grasp another trapeze which has been released by his fellow-gymnast, who has been going through a similar series of movements on the opposite side; and finally arrive, by means of the impetus thus obtained, at a certain point in the arc of his swing at the same moment that the other, dropping from above, reaches it to be caught, hand to hand. At no stage of this complex operation can either of the performers hurry or retard his progress; their meeting in mid-air is managed entirely by the preconcerted instant at which each shall start on his train of manœuvres. Each practises these thoroughly, with the amount of rapidity, neither more nor less, to which he intends to adhere, so that he will hardly vary a second in the duration of time which they occupy in a thousand repetitions of them. This individual accuracy being attained, the co-ordination becomes simple enough.

After all, it is not more wonderful than many actions which we perform in daily life without any conscious practice at all, such as stepping or jumping across a narrow space with the exact impetus requisite to land us on the opposite side, and no more. What a calculation that would be to work out on paper—the weight to be lifted or propelled, the distance, the mechanical powers employed, and the modifications of their mode of action! So we toss a ball up to within a few inches of the ceiling, purposely avoiding it, and place our hand to receive it without hesitation, almost unconsciously, in a spot which is traversed by the line of its descent to the ground. It may be remembered, too, that the trapezist has more latitude than at first sight appears to be the case. He does not keep his arms stiff and extended, and trust to the bar coming within the scope of his fingers to an inch. If he be closely watched during his passage through the air, his hands will be seen to be placed, palms forward, just in front of the shoulders, the elbows being flexed and pressed against the sides. He can thus raise or

lower the arms, extend them or retain them in the bent position, according to the relation which he perceives he will occupy towards the bar on reaching that point in his flight which will bring him nearest to it; and can therefore make sure of grasping the bar whether that point brings it against his waist or carries him a foot below it.

ONE FALSE, BOTH FAIR;

OR, A HARD KNOT.

BY JOHN B. HARWOOD.

CHAPTER IX.—TWO LETTERS.

BREAKFAST at Sir Pagan's dilapidated town-house in Bruton Street was not a very cheerful meal. The baronet was not a domestic man. His custom was to eat his devilled kidney or his morsel of broiled chicken hastily, if with a good appetite, such as few London men retain; then to scrawl a reply to such letters as imperatively needed one; and then to start for the business of the day—the stables to visit, the horses to cheapen, the bets, the cards, the game at pool. Verily, some of us of bluest blood, and who know the inside of a counting-house only by hearsay, are men of business yet, and keenly eager to make both ends meet somehow. And of such was Sir Pagan Carew. His sister, who sat opposite to him, presented a marked contrast to him, pale, beautiful, and slender as she was, in her mourning garb. She looked ill at ease, and was very silent, and so indeed was he, and sullen withal. Only two letters lay on the table, letters in coroneted envelopes, and both addressed to Sir Pagan, who seemed in no hurry to open them, but eyed them askance, as he bent his swarthy face over his plate, as though each of them had contained a writ of the Common Law division of the Supreme Court of Justice against his impetunious self.

'Will you not read your letters, Pagan?' asked the girl at last, as she pushed from her her almost untasted breakfast, and spoke eagerly, but with a half-timid sigh, and a flush of rising pink in her pale cheek. 'I think there may be something—something about—me!' she added plaintively, as her great blue eyes turned towards her brother's face.

'Oh, bother it, my dear—won't they keep!' was the baronet's bluff rejoinder, as he fidgeted uneasily in his chair. He was one of those men who have a genuine dislike to pen and ink, and who ought to have been born when a layman's hand was more familiar with the sword-hilt than with goose-quill or pen-holder, and clerkly lore the prerogative of the cloister. In very truth, though Sir Pagan's correspondence was a tolerably extensive one, the conducting of it cost him far more pain than pleasure. There were some epistles that for weeks and months he never dared to open at all, so hateful is the persistence of a dunning tradesman. There were telegrams that he tore open in feverish haste, only to learn that his reliable intelligence was worthless, his racing 'touts' a failure, and he himself a poorer man, because one thorough-bred horse had centered in an easy winner, and another been left ignominiously in the rear of the flying squadron at Newmarket or elsewhere.

'No—Pagan; it is for me—for my sake,' faltered the sweet low voice. 'I see my sister's handwriting on one of the letters, and I cannot rest until— Ah, how I wish, I wish'—

'Wish, what?' bluntly demanded Sir Pagan, setting down his knife and fork.

Pale, sad, and lovely, but with a set and determined expression about the well-shaped mouth that almost contradicted the timid look from those blue eyes, his sister confronted him. 'There is nothing strange, Pagan dear,' she said, 'in my wishing that all should be again as in the dear old days, and that this horror had never arisen to divide us. It was all owing to that artful Frenchwoman—all. Her craft and daring effrontery alone— But you scarcely catch my meaning, Pagan, and besides, it is too late now—too late! Open your letters, though, I beg. If I flinch not, why should you shrink, brother, from what they may contain? Yes, read, read! and tell me quickly what they say of me!'

Thus adjured, Sir Pagan, with an impatient exclamation, half suppressed, tore open the letter nearest him—a letter in a clear, delicate feminine handwriting. He skimmed hurriedly its contents, drumming on the table with one muscular forefinger as he did so. Then, making a wry face, as a wilful child might do when called upon to swallow some exceptionally nauseous medicament, he opened the second and briefer of the two documents, the penmanship of which, stiff, cramped, and slightly tremulous, was unmistakably that of an elderly lady. He read a few lines, and a scowl darkened his brow, and a flush of angry red coloured the pale brown of his swarthy cheek.

'Confound the old cat! Why should she try her claws on me!' he muttered ruefully. 'I, for one, hate being lectured, even by, Very truly mine, or sincerely, is it? My Lady Barbara Montgomery, at Castel Vawr. Ah! I don't envy your sister her grand house, if she has got to take that starched old piece of austerity as one of the fixtures of it. I've seen her twice—three times, perhaps, and she assumes the privilege of her age and station to rate me like a groom "carpeted," as the servants call it, for misconduct. Seems to think it's my fault that there's a row in the family.—Take the letters, my girl; they are more in your line than mine, and see what you can make of them.' And as the baronet spoke, he pushed over the two letters towards his sister and rose abruptly from his chair. On the battered old sideboard stood an open case, whence peeped forth sundry silver-stoppered bottles. A sip—or a draught—of choice cherry-brandy, or of some kindred liqueur, has been from time immemorial regarded as an indispensable adjunct of a hunting breakfast. Sir Pagan, a keen sportsman in his boyhood, never went hunting now, but he had preserved the practice of his forefathers without their reason for it, and on this occasion he tossed off a couple of glasses of the potent spirit deftly enough. Its immediate effect was to soften his heart, hardening, but not hard as yet, and to render him more sensitive for another's grief. After all, she was his sister. She was weeping now, and had utterly broken down, from the forced composure of her former attitude; and her sobs touched him

even more than they teased him, for he was English to the backbone, and scenes and sentiment were painful to his undramatic nature.

'There, there, little one, don't fret,' he said, from the depths of his pure, stupid good-nature. 'Take my advice, and let bygones be bygones. Make it square with her—a word would do it—and, rely on it, she'll get you as well married as she was, before a year's out; and meanwhile, think what it is to have the run of two such places as Leominster House and Castel Vawr, with such an income to pull upon! See how kindly your sister writes, after all the kick-up! She asks you—begs you—to come to her, not in Wales, but at her big London house, next week, and'—

Sir Pagan was interrupted here. The girl to whom he spoke had been listening, as with a dulled anger, thrusting back the golden hair from her temples, and looking at him with eyes that dilated slowly. Then she sprang to her feet, and the blue eyes flashed, as the baronet had never seen the eyes of either sister flash, throughout all the years that he had known them. But it is wonderful how long uncongenial natures, brought into contact by the bonds of kindred, can dwell side by side without much insight into one another. This was as it were a revelation of character such as sometimes comes to enlighten us respecting those of whose mental or moral calibre we had formed our own humdrum and perhaps depreciatory estimate.

'Never!' she gasped out. 'I enter her house—I cross her threshold—no, no, Pagan! You think that I am weak and silly, and frightened and young, and shall be bribed or scared into giving this up? Never! I tell you, brother—never! It is a part of myself—it is myself! I shall die, or I shall win!'

Sir Pagan frowned, and used perhaps unnecessary violence in closing his brass-mounted liqueur-case, which he locked with care; for the dependents of a country gentleman may emulate their master in a taste for strong and costly stimulants, and the Bruton Street baronet was not rich enough to leave temptation in the way of his underlings. Then he turned towards his guest, and with rough kindness, said: 'Fight it out, my dear, as you two like and choose. I'm sorry—very,' he added hurriedly, as he caught sight of the tear-stained young face, so beautiful, so desolate; 'but you've a home with me, remember, as long as there's a crust.—I'm going out now, and I don't suppose you'll see much of me till dinner-time. I'm not engaged, and shall be back by then. And, and—if you want anything—of course there's old Tucker.'

So he made his escape, and his sister was left alone. There before her lay the letters, and she read them carefully. One of them began thus:

MY DEAR BROTHER—You will know how desolate and sad I feel, and how much my grief for the loss of my kind husband was renewed by my return to the home that once was his. I did not think any other sorrow could have touched me then; but a pain almost as bitter has come to sting my heart. As well as a dear husband, I have lost a darling sister. But only for a time, as I hope and trust and believe, only for a time. I know, of course, that Cora, poor, dear, misguided

Cora, has taken refuge with you; and I write to beg you to persuade my wilful, dearly loved sister to give up the wild scheme which she has rashly adopted, at the instigation, as I firmly believe, of an intriguing Frenchwoman. I hope, dear brother, you will use your influence with her, and tell her to come back to me. We shall be in London next week, at Leominster House. Say that I pray her to come back, and live with me as before, and be, as she has always been, my loving sister as of old. Tell her she need fear no reproaches from me, that this shall pass away like the memory of an evil dream, and she and I be, as we always were, together. I leave this in your hands, dear brother.—Your loving sister,
CLARE LEOMINSTER.

The other letter was to this effect :

DEAR SIR PAGAN—A strong sense of duty alone induces me to pen these few lines to you. The outrage to the memory of my dear nephew, the late Marquis, and I may say to the family of which he was the chief, is one which I should have preferred to have consigned to oblivion, if possible. But the lenity and, in my opinion, mistaken indulgence with which my niece the Marchioness persists in regarding her erring sister, renders it incumbent on me also to urge upon you the propriety of convincing this most unhappy young lady of the error of her ways. I am sure that you must yourself feel that this is necessary for the avoidance of any scandal which might, even indirectly, reflect upon the honour of my family, with which your sister has by marriage become connected. Trusting that you will see the necessity of this, and that your authority may be used to cause the return of your sister to her duty, I remain, dear Sir Pagan, very truly yours,
BARBARA MONTGOMERY.

She who read these lines remained long, as in a state of intellectual torpor, with her eyes resting on the letters that lay before her on the table, although her thoughts were far away. She was disturbed from this reverie at length by the entrance of the servant who came to remove the breakfast things; and then, snatching up the two letters and refolding them, she went up-stairs to the apartments that had been allotted to her. As soon as the door of her own room was shut behind her, she exclaimed, with clenched hand and glittering eyes: 'They do not know me! No; I will go through with it to the last!'

REVERSED WAYS.

THAT different manners and customs prevail in different parts of the world is, of course, known to us all. In some parts of the world, the lips are brought together in token of love and affection; in others, the tips of the noses. In some places, to uncover the head is the mark of respect; in others, to keep it covered. In some places, black clothes are worn as a sign of mourning; in others, white. In some places, the dead are buried horizontally; in others, they are, or have been buried upright. In fact, if we take any of the great events of life, such as death or marriage, we find the ceremonies connected with them differing most curiously in different lands. Buckle

laid down the thesis that the whole course of life was almost wholly and absolutely determined by local food and climate.

Great is the power of local custom; but very great also is the power of what we may call the dominant fashion of dress and manners among the higher classes in a nation, and among the leading nations in the world. Thus we find Oriental peoples eagerly adopting Western habits. The European dress is being adopted by degrees in Japan. We find the same in India. The young Bengalee looks on patent-leather boots, a tall hat, and frock-coat, as marks of progress and enlightenment. He likes to dress 'like an Englishman.'

To what extent the two powers, local food and climate, will act and react on each other, it is difficult to say. It is better for the Bengalee gentleman to wear stockings and well-made boots, than to go barefoot, or wear the hard, ill-made shoes of his forefathers. It is better for him to eat with knife and fork than with his fingers. But is it better for him to follow the English fashion in eating much meat and drinking much wine? Has it been for good or evil that the Saxon races who have peopled North America have carried with them the wine-drinking habits that belong to the colder and damper climates whence they came? Would the native of India be the better for eating the cheese and drinking the beer of the English labourer? Would it be good for the English labourer to live on rice and fruit? Are imported manners and customs, modes of thought and action, better than ones locally grown? That at the first importation there may be harm as well as good, is a point too much overlooked. But this is a theme worthy and capable of wide treatment, such as cannot be given to it in our small space.

These reflections have been suggested by recalling to mind the curious differences between the habits and dress of the people in India and those of our own. It is when you get to the East that you find not merely differences in these matters, but an utter change and complete reversal. There you find that the primitive, the old-world manners and customs still prevail.

It would not be possible to give all the differences to be met with in a big city like Bombay with its heterogeneous population; we will therefore undertake the smaller task of carrying the reader up with us to our bungalow in a small station in Northern India, betwixt Ganges and Jumna, and noting down the differences that strike us, not by elaborate search, but by simply looking around us as we sit in the open veranda. There is the Monshee or Persian writer doing his work at one end of the veranda. He writes squatted on the floor, with the paper held in his left hand, and resting on his right knee. Here is the first of the direct reversals of our way of doing things; for it will be noticed that the characters run from right to left. Look at

the tailor, your own private tailor, who is sitting at the other end of the veranda sewing. You see that he uses his toes as well as his fingers; his feet are bare of course; holding out the cloth with his toes, while his fingers are engaged in the work of sewing.

Look at the people at work about that house that is just being built. They work in a manner quite different from that of our workmen. They do not dig with a spade like ours. They could not press the spade into the ground as does an English workman, for their feet are bare. Nor could they throw up the clod from the end of the spade, for their arms are not strong enough. They use a spade shaped something like a hoe, with the blade set at an angle to the handle, which is very short, and they dig with a stroke from above the head, the body well bent down; and bring up the clod, or mass of earth on the blade, by straightening the body again. You see that women are chiefly employed in carrying up the bricks and mortar, and they carry everything on the head. You see that cattle are used for all purposes of draught, to pull the carts and draw the plough. This you may see in parts of Europe too. But this difference of the animal used has a most important bearing on agriculture in India. English officials have been frustrated in their efforts to improve the wretched Indian plough by the seemingly absurd and odious reason that the cattle can only be driven by twisting their tails! Hence the tails must not be out of reach of the driver's hand.

That light open cart, with its one square seat, on which the banker, who has just been calling on me, sits cross-legged, wrapped up in his shawls, is going rapidly down the road; and you see that the driver sits on a small square board fixed on to the pole, with his legs dangling down on each side, close behind the bullocks, and pressing his feet against them from behind.

When the banker called, you observed that he did not uncover his head, but put off his shoes before coming into the room. This is another of the reversals of things. To remove the covering of the feet and not of the head is the mark of respect in the East. It is easy enough to see how the putting off the shoes on entering a house came to be a social observance very early in the East. The Orientals sit and recline on carpets placed on the floor or on a dais. This takes the place of our couches and chairs. To a Mohammedan gentleman, the dais, covered with its carpet and with its pillows and bolsters, represents house and home. Here he passes the greater part of his time; here he does his work, and here he receives his friends. This dais is his drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom. To come on to the carpet with shoes on after walking in the miry and dusty ways of the East, would soon soil and dirty it. This is the main reason for the observance. But another doubtless is, that it would be very uncomfortable to squat down with your feet under you with hard shoes on; besides, it would soil your garments. It may be conjectured that one reason for not removing the head-covering is, that most Eastern nations shave the

top of the head only, letting the lower hair hang down long. Thus the hair is kept or worn in a manner suitable only to the head being covered. To appear without the covering is like a bald man appearing without his wig. Even in his own home, when a native removes his turban, he puts on a small light skull-cap. It would be a great mark of disrespect for one of your native servants to come before you without his turban and with only his skull-cap on, and without his *cummurbund* round his waist; it would be like a footman coming in without his coat. This difference of custom is no mere trifling matter, but has been a grave political question in India.

The 'shoe question' is one that has led to trouble between what are called the more enlightened natives and the English for many years past. The former claimed that when they wore shoes after the English fashion, they should not be called upon to take them off on occasions of ceremonial visits or on public occasions. On the other hand, masters (English) in colleges would not let students enter their rooms, judges (English) would not let native gentlemen enter their court-houses, without their first taking their shoes off. This was not from any personal arrogance, but from regard to their official dignity. To enter a place with shoes on is a strong mark of disrespect in the East, and they did not wish to submit to this. They claimed that one mark of respect or the other should be adhered to—that the men should either take off their shoes or uncover the head. Lord Lawrence, when viceroy, had to issue a state injunction on the subject!

It is strange to see the old Eastern custom still surviving among the Jews. The English Jew, who in all other places has accepted the English views and practice in the matter, keeps his modern tall hat on in the synagogue.

Looking round at the domestic arrangements in the bungalow, you see how many things are the reverse of what they are 'at home.' There is a 'washerman' instead of a washerwoman. The cook is invariably a man. The great object in a house in England is to prevent draughts; Anglo-Indians strive to promote draughts. You see we have doors and windows in every wall of every room; in most rooms four, and in some six doorways. You see that as a rule everything is on one floor; there are no stairs, no cellars, no kitchen; the cooking-room is away from the house.

Let us now stroll into this small neighbouring 'bazaar.' Here is complete dissimilitude from any street in any town or village in Europe. There is no point of resemblance. However much eating-houses may differ in England and France and Spain, they in the main resemble one another: the food is the same in kind, though not in form; there are chairs and tables, knives and forks, spoons and cups and glasses, in them all. In this eating-house in the bazaar before which we stop there are none of these things; the food is entirely different. French bread, and Vienna bread, and English bread differ; but they are all made with leaven; here you have nothing but unleavened cakes. The food is utterly different in character.

You see the artisans in the various little shops

all work in a manner different from English workmen. They never work standing or seated on a bench, but always squatted on the ground. No Englishman, except a circus clown perhaps, could sit as those men do with their legs doubled under them. Here is the shop of our friend the banker, his shop and office. How different from an English one. No chairs, no tables, no desks, simply a single open room with the floor covered with druggot, on which lie a heap of oblong books of coarse paper, and a pencease, with its reed-pens and inkpot full of rags! What would the English clerk think of books kept without a single ruled line in them? There is not a pencil or a ruler in the place. And yet this man carries on a large business, has transactions over thousands of miles. There he sits cross-legged in one corner against a heap of cushions; there are the clerks squatted down—their legs invisible—bending over the books.

Look round, and you see that baskets, loads of wood and grass, and bales of goods, are all carried on the head. We look into a school. Master and pupils are all seated on the floor. The copy-books are bits of board smeared over with a white unctuous earth. Here is a barber with his little satchel, shaving the head of a customer, both squatted of course on the bare ground. The barber has a razor, but he uses only water, and has no soap. He brings the eyebrows of his customer to a fine point at each end, by shaving them, and then cuts his finger-nails and toe-nails for him—with the razor!

Here is a damsel from the country buying, or rather having made for her, trinkets at this silversmith's shop. The silversmith is squatted on the bare earthen floor; a brazier of charcoal, a pair of pincers, a blowpipe, and a little hammer and anvil, his whole apparatus. The young woman belongs to the peasant class, and so is not obliged to hide her face in public, as would a native woman of the better classes. She does not wrap herself up, shroud herself in her long ample 'sheet,' but lets it hang from the back of her head. You see, therefore, that her hair is well plastered down with oil on each side; that the line of the parting is filled and marked out with a red pigment; that in the middle of her forehead she wears a small tinsel ornament stuck on like a wafer or patch; that she wears a big ring in her nose; that her ears have not merely the one hole through the lobe, as with us, but that there are two or three other holes in the cartilage above it, each having in it a ring or a stud. Her dress consists simply of a petticoat coming down to a little below the knees, the long sheet, and a small close-fitting bodice without sleeves. The feet and ankles are bare. Round the ankles are thick ornaments of brass, the colour of which well suits the brown skin. On each toe and between the toes are also many brass and pewter rings and other ornaments, some with bells, so that she makes 'music wherever she goes.' She has 'rings on her fingers' too, plenty of them; and those on the thumbs have little round mirrors fixed on to them. On her wrist and arm are many bright rings of sealing-wax and glass; and on the upper arm below the shoulder is bound an amulet; and the whole arm is tattooed. The pattern of the cloth on her sheet and petticoat is such as you have never seen in Europe. It

has been made of the same coarse texture, stamped with the same quaint patterns, and manufactured and sold within the same narrow radius of country, for thousands of years back.

Look at the dress of that group of men—neat, decent, comfortable, picturesque, yet quite unlike our own. The place of our trousers is taken by the *dhotee*, which consists simply of a long piece of linen bound round the waist and tucked in between the legs. It requires training to put it on, or rather fix it properly, and it forms a very neat, decent, practical garment. Above this is a small jacket or a long coat bound round the waist with the *cummurbund* or loin-cloth, an essential and significant part of the dress; the loins are girded when going abroad, loosened in the freedom of domestic privacy. On the head is the *pugree* or turban, also a very significant part of the dress; for its shape, size, colour, and form vary with the race, occupation, and caste of the wearer. But in all the garments of that big crowd of men and women, you will not find a single hook or eye or button!

On our way back to the bungalow from the bazaar we pass by a village. Here, too, everything is different from what it is in an English village. There is nothing here that you would find in the latter; not the roughest kind of table or chair, not the rudest kind of knife or fork, not the commonest kind of jug or cup or tumbler. The zemindar is a wealthy man, and has a big house and many retainers. But in all the house you will not find a single piece of what we call furniture; not a table, chair, bookcase, sofa, chest of drawers, or anything of that sort. There is not a single article of crockery or glass in it. There are plenty of vessels to eat and drink out of, but they are all of copper or brass. The form of these, as of the earthenware water-jars and goblets and pots, is utterly different from the forms our articles take. You see the men cut the corn not standing up, but sitting down, with a small sickle, and not with a scythe. The corn is trodden out by bullocks at the thrashing-floor, and is winnowed by simply throwing it up in the air and letting the chaff blow away. The women carry their heavy water-jars on their heads.

As we walk by the village, we note the difference between an English herd of cattle and that herd of thin, lean, ragged, dirty cows and bullocks. What a difference between that instrument called a plough and an English plough! There is the son of the zemindar riding into the town. A very different sight that from the son of an English Squire riding out! How different the gear; how different the horse; how different the mode of riding! How different the heavy clumsy cloth saddle from the neat pig-skin one! How different the head-gear! The horse is fattened up until he is in 'soft' condition. That he should have 'a belly on' is not held a defect here, but a beauty. His legs and tail are coloured, his mane plaited. Four white legs are considered good points. A wall-eye is considered ornamental. A white face and pink nose are much prized. The horse's head is well tied down to his chest by means of a thick cloth martingale. He moves along at a slow, shuffling, half-dancing amble, throwing the right leg well up into the air

with a sort of convulsive jerk, which he has been taught to do after long training. The young man sits back proud and happy. Behind him come two footmen, one bearing his hookah, the other his drinking-water. A native never trots, and rarely gallops his horse, but generally goes along at an amble. How different is that small village *hackery* from an English village cart. There is not a nail in it; it is made chiefly of bamboo, and put together with leather thongs and string; the wheels do not revolve on the axle, but with it.

Look at the natives about us as we sit in the veranda; and the chief things that strike us, apart from the difference in dress, are the bare legs and feet, the brown and black skin, the squatting on the ground, the eating with the fingers. Look out at the prospect, and we are likewise struck by the brownness of the land where uncovered with crops; the scantiness of the patches of green grass; the brown stems of the trees; the clouds of dust raised by every puff of wind; the absence of colour in distant objects; and the bright, clear, dazzling sunshine. We long for the sight of a bit of green grass and the shadow of a passing cloud. Here is the great reversal. Instead of too little sunshine, we have too much.

THE MAN IN POSSESSION.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

THERE are many ups and downs in some lives, far more than are usually dreamed of by the few who, 'born with a silver spoon in their mouth,' pursue the even tenor of their path, unruffled by the cares and afflictions which crowd upon, and too often overwhelm the less fortunate. Hard as it is to grapple with and bear the troubles which are inevitable to us in the ordinary course of nature, those we induce by our own indiscretion and folly are still more galling. I am afraid my case must rank among the latter, as you shall presently hear.

I will not inflict upon you my antecedents; sufficient to state that I am the son of a gentleman in good, though not opulent circumstances. My father gave me an excellent education, and afterwards a fair start in life by articling me to a neighbouring solicitor. I might have done well, for I liked the profession, and was an apt pupil; but, unfortunately—as is the case with too many intellectual young men—I fell into evil company. It is unnecessary to enumerate the steps, from bad to worse, which gradually led to my undoing; eventually, I so far disgraced myself that my indentures were cancelled. Ashamed to meet my father, I went out into the world an outcast, with scarcely a shilling in my pocket. Failing other employment, I was at last compelled—though bitterly repugnant to my feelings—to accept the humble occupation of a common bailiff; and here my narrative begins.

'Meredith,' said my chief to me one bright May morning, when I waited upon him for instructions, 'I wish you to run down to Briteleigh in the matter of Warley against Wintock, and take possession in the usual manner. You will be more than ordinarily careful, as we have to do with a very subtle customer. Jones has

already been down in the neighbourhood; but has returned unsuccessful and quite disheartened. I hope, however, you will have better luck. When once within the premises, you had better sleep with one eye open, or not at all, if you can so manage it.'

Now, I rather prided myself upon my professional dexterity, and this my employer knew; but it would have been childish to boast before him. I therefore smiled, but said nothing. Some other directions followed, of no importance to my tale; and after packing a few necessaries in a carpet-bag, I started for Briteleigh. It was the dusk of evening when I arrived at my destination; and I forthwith proceeded to reconnoitre the premises in which I was for a time to domicile as the humble representative of the 'majesty of the law,' and take under my surveillance the goods, chattels, &c., of Arthur Wintock, Esq., until either the just claims of Warley Warley, Esq., of Warley Hall should be fully and duly satisfied, together with all legal expenses incurred; or the said goods, chattels, &c., should be publicly brought to the hammer.

On my arrival at the village of Briteleigh, I went at once to have a sight of the house intrusted to me. Briteleigh Hall was a large, gloomy, old-fashioned building of the preceding century, and stood at some distance from the high-road, and in the centre of a park of considerable extent. The original edifice seemed to have been added to at different periods; for the superstructure rose in a motley succession of triangular gabled ends from the outhouses to the principal roof, which, surrounded by a parapet, and crowned with enormous stacks of tall chimney-pots, capped the whole. It struck me at the first glance, that however strongly bolted and barred below, it would be easy for any burglar to scale the height and effect an entrance by one of the numerous garret casements which fronted the parapet, unless the same were strongly secured. However, as I had no thought of entering the house by this way myself, and as it was too late to hope to effect an entrance at all that evening, I returned to the village, and walked into the *Three Nags*, a comfortable roadside inn, about a hundred yards from the park-gates. I entered the snug bar-parlour and seated myself. It was occupied only by the landlord and two other persons, tradesmen of the village. The three were quietly sipping their glasses and having a friendly chat.

'Fine evening, sir,' said mine host, as, noticing that I was a stranger, he saluted me respectfully. 'What will you please to take?'

'Oh, a little rum-and-water, if you please.—Can I have a bed here to-night, landlord?'

'By all means, sir!—second-floor back.—Going to stay long?'

'Hum! That depends upon circumstances. At anyrate, I may require it for three or four nights at least.'

I felt disposed to secure a night-lodging for a short time; for in our line we are by no means sure when or how we shall be able to obtain access to the premises of which we are to take temporary 'possession.' Besides, my inn expenses would be refunded; a few extra shillings were therefore of no consequence.

My entrance and the bustle of the landlord

had interrupted the talk for a while; but after a few commonplace remarks, such as usually pass between strangers, I settled down quietly to my rum-and-water, and the conversation was resumed.

'They do say he used her most cruelly, poor young lady,' said the stouter of the tradesmen, who sat nearest the fireplace, and who appeared to be indignant about some point which had been mooted.

'Cruelly! I should think he did,' replied the other. 'Ah! it was a sad affair for her when her poor papa died. How he could leave her in the guardianship of such an old curmudgeon beats my understanding.'

'Well,' replied the other, 'he didn't show the black-feather so much while the old man was alive; and they say he was greatly disappointed that his brother did not leave him a good share of the property. It appears he bequeathed nearly all to Miss Maria, his only daughter, allowing, however, a handsome sum per annum to her guardian, to meet the expenses of bringing her up. It is said that the latter tried to force her into a marriage with her cousin, his son George, as unprincipled as himself, and as reckless a spendthrift and gambler as ever handled the dice.'

'Ah! well, I suppose that was before I came into the village then, neighbour. You know I only left the north last Christmas twelvemonth.—But where is the young lady now?'

'That's a question neither I nor any one else in Briteleigh can satisfactorily answer. All we know is, that she *was* at the Hall. The Squire gave out about a twelvemonth after her father's death, that she had gone to Paris to complete her education; but no one ever saw her go, or has ever seen her since. There are never any letters in a female hand received at the Hall, either from France or elsewhere—at least so asserts Simmons the grocer, who keeps the post-office.'

'But the servants—do they never speak of her? Surely they must know.'

'He keeps none that are allowed to enter the house, except a big bully of an Italian fellow, whom he brought from abroad—for he was formerly a resident in Italy, and had only returned to England a year or two before his brother's decease—and a cross-grained old woman, who is as impenetrable as adamant, for no one can ever get anything out of her. Neither the gardener, nor the odd man who jobs about the premises and looks after the horses, is allowed to intrude. A great part of the house is shut up as closely as if the whole were uninhabited. However, it is supposed to be full of real good furniture, for old Mr Wintock lived in great style, and none has ever been known to be disposed of.'

Hitherto, I had taken but little interest in the conversation; for I was busily employed in ruminating upon my plans for the morrow. Though they had spoken of the Hall, it had not fixed my attention. But when the name of Wintock was mentioned, it roused me at once, and I immediately asked: 'Are you speaking of Mr Wintock—up the way?' pointing with my thumb in the direction of his mansion.

'The very same, sir,' replied the stout man,

glad to have another interested auditor. 'Ah!' he continued, 'there's something exceedingly mysterious about the disappearance of that young lady. Some even go so far as to hint foul-play. I, for one, don't quite believe that. But certain it is, you wouldn't catch one of the village people crossing the park after dark.'

'Indeed! Why not?'

'Why, sir, you see I don't take any heed of such superstitious nonsense myself; but it is whispered among the poorer folk that a white face is sometimes seen at the windows at unearthly hours, and that fearful shrieks have occasionally been heard at midnight. You know what a country village is, and how easily a place obtains the repute of being haunted. Once upon a time, some of our fellows would steal up there after dark to catch a rabbit or two, for there is a warren on the far side of the house; but I'd venture a five-pound note that not one of them would be hardy enough to try now for all the rabbits in the county. There are reports, too, that old Wintock, or he and his son together, have outrun the constable.'

'Oh! Is it true, think you?'

'I believe it to be so. They do say that the life Mr George and his father lead has involved both very deeply in liabilities which neither can meet. Drinking, horseracing, gambling, and, if people are to be credited, swindling, are to be numbered among their accomplishments. The last dodge was a clever, though a rascally one.'

'Hum! What might that be?'

'Well, it seems that old Wintock had run matters so close that he was daily threatened by one of his tradespeople with an execution. As he owed largely, he bethought himself that if this was once suffered to take effect, the rest of his creditors would be after him immediately. To save matters, he goes to a Mr Warley of Warley Hall, in Downshire, of whom he had some knowledge, represents that he is staying in his neighbourhood for a short time, and that, in consequence of expenses which young Wintock has incurred at college, he has occasion for a few hundreds; and so induced the old gentleman to advance him the money on a bill of three months at good interest. When the time expired, the bill was dishonoured—not a rap to meet it, at least at the banker's.'

'Then young Wintock was not at college?'

'Not he. It was all a scheme to rid them of present difficulties. But I suppose old Warley is down upon them at last rather sharp.'

All this I knew before, but was not aware that it was also known at Briteleigh. The old proverb says, 'Ill news travels apace.' It is astonishing how rapidly the misfortunes or crimes of even the most wary get noised abroad, in spite of the most strenuous efforts to keep them concealed. I did not, however, enlighten my friend as to my foreknowledge, though I could not help thinking that he partly guessed the import of my visit to the village. But I did not deem it expedient to satisfy his evident curiosity, lest in some way it might embarrass my movements. I accordingly took an early opportunity of changing the subject; and after spending a very comfortable evening in social chat, retired to rest.

I rose early next morning, and sauntered carelessly into the park, making a circuit, to examine

the house more thoroughly. If possible, it appeared more sombre and uninviting by daylight than on the previous evening. Not that I attached much importance to the tale of my informant about its being haunted; but its heavy closed windows and its general dilapidated look gave it altogether a chilling appearance, which jarred dismally with the fresh spring scenery around. I cautiously neared the house and made a careful reconnaissance. Apparently, no one was stirring. The front-door I found was fastened. I went quietly round to the yard at the back and tried the latch of the kitchen door. It was fastened also.

'Hullo, guv'nor, what do 'ee want?'

I fairly started, and looked up, for I had thought myself unperceived. I could for the moment see no one.

'Wants to rob the house, do 'ee?' the voice continued. 'Wait till I calls the measter to 'ee. Thieves, thieves!'

At the same moment the barking of a large dog broke forth within the house. I grasped my heavy walking-stick more tightly; it had a loaded handle. I did not feel altogether comfortable. The voice was that of the gardener. He came into the yard through a small gateway which I had not observed, and which led into the garden. He held a long sharp three-pronged fork in his hand. I saw at a glance that move the first was defeated. Supposing the inmates to be ignorant of my arrival, my plan had been to cower quietly by the door until opened for egress, which I had calculated would be early in the morning, by one of the domestics—either for water, as there was a pump in the yard, or for some other purpose—and then slip in with a dash. Once in, I did not despair of holding my ground, for I had on me a couple of very pretty 'persuaders,' in case of attempted violence—a pair of pocket pistols.

'There!' I said quietly; 'stop that confounded noise. You know better than that. Is Mr Wintock in?'

The man grinned. 'Can't 'xactly say. Dunno. Which on 'em?'

'The elder Mister Wintock. I want to see him on particular business.'

'Do 'ee?'

'Here; come this way a minute,' I whispered, at the same time holding up a sovereign between my finger and thumb and stepping under cover of the eaves of an outhouse. 'Now, don't you think you can get me speech with Mr Wintock this morning for this little bit of yellow stuff? You don't pick up sovereigns every day, I dare-say.'

I had hastily determined to secure the fellow as an ally if possible, and felt that a bribe was the only means of doing so.

He scratched his head, grinned, and looked wistfully at the coin. 'Oi dares to say I could—out of doors;' and he stretched out his hand for it.

'Not so fast, my man. You must earn it first. It must be inside. You are not such a flat but that you guess my business here. Let me only put one foot within the doorway, and it is yours.'

The gardener gave me a peculiar look, and burst into a loud haw-haw! as he turned away. 'No use, measter! T'other chap tried that little game.'

I saw my scheme was frustrated, and that there was no help for it. Nevertheless, I hung about the premises for some time, but to no purpose. I went away for a while, and returned again as stealthily as I could. I watched the house for days, and from every available corner that I could use as a hiding-place. The inmates were too much upon their guard. It appeared there was a pump in the scullery as well as in the yard, and plenty of coal in the cellars. The place seemed victualled for a siege. Not a soul ever passed or repassed the door, at least with my cognisance. What orders were issued, were given to Hodge from an upper window, inaccessible by me. At last I determined to give up watching, and try if I could not accomplish my purpose in some other way. I withdrew, foiled, but not defeated.

Thus matters remained for some time, until I began to think I should fare no better than my predecessor, and to grow dispirited; when a lucky accident turned up, which aided me not a little.

One afternoon, disgusted with my ill success, I had taken a walk round the park, and had nearly reached the side remotest from the Hall, when I was startled by hearing sounds of altercation and loud screams for help. I did not hesitate an instant; but in two minutes had scaled the park palings and leaped into the lonely by-road which bounded them on that side. It was well that I did so; for I was just in time to render efficient aid to an elderly female vainly attempting to hold her own against two villainous-looking tramps. The old dame was a carrier from Briteleigh to a neighbouring town, whither she went three times a week with her cart and blind pony, to fetch and carry for the villagers, packages and parcels of all descriptions, from a lady's dress to half a pound of tea. The rascals attempted to help themselves to some of the numerous provisions in the vehicle; and being resisted by her, were just on the point of using violence when I rushed unperceived to the rescue, and caused the fellows to beat a hasty retreat.

The dame was profuse in her thanks for my timely assistance, and earnest in her way to make me some recompense. The poor old creature had been terribly alarmed, and shook like an aspen. In assisting her to repack her things, and in trying to reassure her, I very naturally inquired where she was going.

'Deed, an' I be goin' on to the Hall.'

The mention of the Hall arrested my attention, and an idea immediately occurred to me. This time, however, I determined to experimentalise, without taking my ally into my confidence.

'Going to the Hall, mother, are you?' I said carelessly. 'Ah! I suppose you take parcels there very often, of course?'

'Why, yes, I do, and I don't now. I go every fortnight for the linen. The family don't wash at home; they send it all to Mrs Biggs at the village. Them clothes-baskets you see there,' she added, nodding to them, 'are for the Wintocks; I'm goin' to leave 'em as I go along.'

'Well, dame,' I said, 'I am only out for a stroll. Perhaps those scamps may be lurking about somewhere, to give you another turn as soon as I am fairly out of sight. Suppose I ride a little way with you for protection. What say you?'

The dame willingly assented; and I mounted

the cart beside her. It was pretty closely packed with sundry parcels, besides the baskets in question, and well secured behind with a coverlet, tied down to the hinder part of the cart. The blind pony started at a shambling trot. Mrs Stokes and I got into conversation.

'How do you contrive to get these great baskets out of the cart and into the house?'

'Oh, that's easily done. I untie the cloth behind; and Martha—that's the old woman at the Hall—or else the Italian servant, helps me in with 'em.'

And so we jogged on, chatting, round the exterior of the park, until within a few dozen yards of its gates.

'Dame!' I said suddenly, 'I did you a good turn a little while back; now I want you to do one for me in return.'

Mrs Stokes was taken at a disadvantage, and looked at me with a perplexed expression upon her countenance. She clearly did not know what to make of my observation.

'I see that your cart is well filled behind,' I continued, 'so as to screen any one in front from observation, while you are unloading the baskets, if he crouches in this spare place by the seat. Now, I have a fancy just to ride up close to the Hall, so as to get a peep at it unperceived, and which I can easily do through this small hole in the side of the cart. I have heard a great deal of talk about the old place during the short time I have been in this part of the country, and feel a little curious; but, for a certain reason of my own, I don't wish to be seen by the inmates.'

'Mercy me! man!' ejaculated the old lady, with a pull at the reins which brought the blind pony to a sudden stand, almost flinging him upon his haunches, 'what can you want such a thing as that for? I hope you mean no harm. Surely your face is too honest for a'—

'Burglar,' said I, finishing the sentence for her. 'Now, that's very complimentary indeed, after the assistance I gave you just now. I never heard of a thief interfering to prevent a robbery.' I spoke as if offended, and could see the poor old creature's feelings were hurt.

'Na, na! I didn't mean *that*. But it seems such an odd thing like.'

'Dame! I suppose they pay you pretty regularly up there?'

'Humph! Wish I could say they did. Owe me a matter of a dozen shillings. Always behind. Promise to pay. Get a little by dribs and drabs. It's hard lines, though, for an old body like me.'

'Ah, now! let me do as I say, and here's a sovereign for you; that will clear the debt and leave you a little balance besides.'

The old lady looked at me hard in the face, and then at the coin. 'I understand,' she said; 'a friend of the family—wants to see without being seen, before making yourself known. Just come from abroad, perhaps, eh? No! young man; put up your money. One good turn deserves another. It shall never be said that old Sally Stokes was too greedy to return a favour without being paid for it, so you may just do as you please.'

'Thank 'ee, mother. I knew you'd oblige me. If ever I have the chance, I'll repay you with interest; but I shall insist upon your accepting this at least,' at the same time slipping a crown

into her palm. 'Now, don't speak to me, or take any more notice of me than if I was a young sucking-pig for the Squire's table.' So saying, I crouched down in the coveted corner, and disposed of a few of the parcels so as to effectually screen me from observation. In a few seconds more we had entered the park. Jog, jog, up the long avenue, through the wicket gate, and up to the back-door. The dame alighted, rang the bell, and commenced unfastening the coverlet behind. An upper window was opened. 'Oh, it's only Mrs Stokes with the linen,' said a female voice. 'Wait till I chain up the dog;' and the window was immediately closed again.

I began to feel nervous for the success of my plan. Soon the door was opened; and with a passing observation, the female servant of Mr Wintock commenced assisting Mrs Stokes with the first and largest basket of linen. I waited till I saw them enter the house and turn up a long passage; then, hastily alighting from the cart, I slipped in softly after them.

SAVED BY OIL.

FROM an officer in the service of a South of England Shipping Company, we have received the following narrative of his experiences of the use of oil in a tempestuous sea:

In April 1869, I sailed from Cardiff as chief-mate of a barque called the *Glamorganshire*, whose dimensions were—length, one hundred and forty-eight feet; breadth, 27·5 feet; depth, 17·5 feet; and register tonnage, 45·7 tons; built of greenheart, with iron beams, and classed at Lloyd's A1, fourteen years. As may be inferred from our port of departure, our cargo was coal, of which there were upwards of seven hundred tons on board. And I remember remarking as we left the docks, that our draught at the sternpost was equal to the depth of hold, but the draught forward was some twenty inches less. But be that as it may, although I did not measure our freeboard, I know that it was very small, and I felt sure that in heavy weather our ship would be a wet one. Encountering a south-west gale as we left the docks, we had an opportunity of testing the capabilities of the crew, which consisted of two able-bodied seamen, two ordinary seamen, one cook-and-steward, three mates, a carpenter, the captain, and six apprentices, two or three of whom had made one voyage to sea, the others being quite inexperienced.

When we dismissed the tug off Lundy Island, we made sail, and before many hours passed, had to reef the topsails; but our apprentices would not go aloft, as they were afraid to leave the deck. Nevertheless, by dint of a little encouragement, they were induced to ascend to the fore-top-sail yard, and assist to the best of their ability in reefing the sail; and before we had got south of the roaring forties, they could all hand-reef and steer in a very creditable manner. Unfortunately, our carpenter died before we reached Madeira, and as the ship was on her first voyage, there were lots of carpentering jobs to do, which devolved chiefly upon myself and the captain. So, while we were running through the trade-

winds, we had managed to get the ship pretty square and ready for heavy weather.

Rounding the Cape in July—which is there the depth of winter—we edged away southward until the parallel of from thirty-eight to thirty-nine degrees south was reached, and upon which parallel it was determined that we would run down the easting. There we began to encounter stormy weather. Well do I remember that a few nights after crossing the meridian of the Cape, we had a fresh north-west wind, and were under topsails and courses, when, about half-past seven p.m., a heavy head-sea sprang up from the eastward, causing the ship to dive and plunge violently. We happened to be pumping the ship at the time when she took a heavy dive, stove in the fore-end of the fore-castle—which was a house built abaft the foremast—carried away all the trusses and cranes of the four topsail-yards, threw the third-mate on to his head, and caused my chest to turn a somersault, and remain bottom up while the decks were flooded with water, the ship having buried herself as far as the foremast. Here was the beginning of our troubles; for next day the wind hauled to the westward, and rapidly increased to a gale, accompanied by a rising sea. The wind then veered a little to the southward, when the weather became clear. We were now running before the brave west winds, and these, accompanied as they were by the stupendous seas which they raised, drove our ship at a speed of something like twelve knots an hour. These magnificent seas are a splendid sight, rolling as they do with such stately majesty, changing from dark blue at the base to gray, and then to a beautiful semi-transparent green, near the crest, that curls over with an awe-inspiring roar, breaking into froth and foam, and capping these miniature water-mountains as with snow. Yet grand in aspect as these waves are, they approach a vessel's stern in a way which is sometimes far from pleasant, for they come on us with an angry rush, rapidly increasing in velocity; and if they do not come on board, they break around with a disappointed roar.

After scudding for several days before these gales, and being pooped and quartered by many heavy seas, our vessel was becoming the worse of the buffeting. Some of the boats had been stove in, the cabin and fore-castle several times washed out, while the deck-houses themselves were as leaky as sieves. One afternoon, the captain and myself were employed calking the top of the cabin-house, when a heavy sea boarded the ship, washing us both off the house, and dashing us into the mizen-rigging, where we grasped the shrouds, and were saved from going overboard. Had we been at work a few feet farther aft at the time, we would have gone clear off the rigging and perished. Our calking-irons and mallets were swept overboard.

These gales continuing to blow day after day, our poor barque was suffering much, nearly all the bulwarks having been washed away; while the long-boat, which was stowed in chocks on the main-hatch, and contained the pinnace, stowed bottom up inside, was split into two by the pinnace being driven right through

her, and both lay a mass of wreck on the deck, only prevented from being washed away by the lashings and gripes which still held on. The spare spars were even washed away, dragging with them, out of the deck, the ring-bolts to which they were lashed. The after or booby-hatch was covered with a network of lashings, so persistent did the sea seem in its endeavours to wash it away.

Our time was now employed in repairing damage, and no sooner was one thing secured than something else was washed adrift; or the crew was so repeatedly washed away from their work, that it had sometimes to be abandoned altogether. The captain began to regret that he had not lightened the ship, by heaving cargo overboard, when he had the opportunity. But it was now too late, for no hatch could have been opened without swamping the ship.

During the night-watches the vessel was steered by the two able seamen, of whom there was one in each watch; the captain and myself for night after night taking our shift of four hours at the wheel, which required two hands to manage it. These grand seas still rolled after us, or passed us with their tremendous roar; while others would break over the taffrail and dash on board, when we, before we were aware of what was coming behind us, would be knocked down, washed under the wheel, and on some occasions far forward from the wheel. The cabins would be filled, so that the watch was almost continuously employed during the night in baling out the houses and cabins.

It was one middle watch while at the wheel, assisted by one of the able seamen, that the wind was blowing with unusual fury, accompanied by hard squalls and a tremendous sea, which broke on board with such frequency, knocking about and bruising us at the wheel, that we began to wonder if it were possible for the vessel to survive till daylight. At about four a.m. a great breaker came roaring, in its destructive and irresistible fury, over the taffrail, followed almost immediately by another, which washed us away from the wheel, burst in the cabin doors, filled it, and also the ship's deck up to the level of the topgallant rail. Our little vessel staggered and trembled under the pressure, for she was now completely submerged. Had a third comber of a sea followed the second, I think she would have certainly foundered. As it was, she seemed to hesitate for a moment as to whether she would float or sink; and just as we were thinking she was going down, she seemed to shudder and shake herself, and began to rise and recover her way. She had been nearly at a standstill during this dire ordeal.

After regaining the wheel, which was done almost immediately after the second sea broke on board, and in much less time than it has taken me to relate what happened, we found the vessel within two or three points of her course, and quickly got her straight again. When conversing with my companion, he informed me that he had served several years in schooners employed in carrying fruit from the Western Islands to England, and that when running before a heavy gale and high sea, it was the custom to have two canvas bags filled with oil and hung one over each quarter, whence the oil dripped into the

sea, and diffusing itself over the surface, smoothed the waves. This statement I repeated to the captain, who without any hesitation gave his sanction to the experiment; and as soon as it was daylight, I sent this man to make two bags such as he had seen used on board the fruit schooners. When flattened out, these bags were of a triangular shape, with the apex cut off, and when filled with any liquid, assumed a conical form. In fact, they were none other than the sailors' duff-bags. These bags might contain each about half a gallon of oil, but into each was poured only about a quart, for we had not much to spare; the mouths were securely tied, and then they were hung one over each quarter. The oil now began to drip slowly into the sea; and after a few minutes, the effect produced seemed the work of magic. Although the wind was still blowing a fierce gale, the sea seemed to be comparatively hushed, and, in the wake of the vessel, calm; for instead of the angry roar which we had been so accustomed to hear at our backs while steering the vessel, all was quiet, save occasionally a bigger and more furious wave would lap a little of its subdued crest over the taffrail and quarters with a hissing and defiant noise. What was before a great combing sea, was now reduced to a huge mountainous swell, which rolled harmlessly up to us and passed us with a smooth and almost combless crest. But on each side of our track, and where the oil had not diffused itself, the waves still broke and roared with unabated fury.

For many days we ran before these noble gales and seas; but not another ever came on board. At times the canvas bags became clogged with the oil, and then they were pricked with a large roping-needle, which was attached to one of them by a lanyard for that purpose. The quantity of oil used, so far as I remember, did not exceed half a gallon in the twenty-four hours. Compared with such a small quantity of oil, the effect of it upon the sea was almost incredible.

Relating the above facts to some friends in Nagasaki, among whom was an Irishman, the latter remarked that it was no wonder the sea was smoothed with the oil, since the latter was so slippery that the wind could not take hold of it. Now, I have since learned from your *Journal* that this really is the reason, though I was perhaps disposed to think at the time that the Irishman was only quizzing me.

SPONGE-CULTIVATION.

It is not unfrequently happens that nature's most useful and consequently most valuable products are those which are 'free as the light and air of heaven' to all. It is a pity that it is necessary we should add that these are the things also which are most frequently and unwarrantably abused. Cupidity, carelessness, waste, and a wanton disregard of the future, is the return often made for all the lavish bounty of nature. Need we wonder that nature retaliates, and that diminution, dearth, and ultimate extinction are the results of this ruthless disregard of her laws and operations. We might give many examples of this waste—a waste which in many cases would most certainly have ended in extinction of the product, had not the legislature interfered in time with its protecting power. If such a recital,

however, is fitted to teach us a lesson, the lesson is certainly not complete without a reference also to the reverse side of the picture, in which man's ingenuity and industry in assisting nature to increase her stores have redeemed to a great extent the darker side to which we have just referred. Here also we might take examples from every department of nature, and show what man has done by his skill and perseverance in fostering, often amid much discouragement and failure, nature's operations; and in so doing, has not only increased and cheapened her commodities, but frequently laid the foundation of new industries.

Something approaching to what we have thus shortly indicated is apparently taking place in the sponge-fishery industry; and we mention it at present to show what has recently been accomplished in artificially propagating this useful article. The sponges of commerce are almost entirely obtained from tropical or sub-tropical seas; the Mediterranean and Red Seas in the one hemisphere; and the Caribbean Islands, Bahaman Archipelago, and the southern and western coasts of Florida, in the other. In those regions sponges attain their greatest development both in form and species. It is in the last-named localities that the experiments which we are about to mention were conducted, and which were undertaken from the fact that the sponge-fisheries on all the surrounding coasts were being rapidly exhausted.

The natural process of reproduction in the sponge is, we may state, effected by gemmation or budding-off. The gemmules or buds in the first instance are minute globular particles of gelatinous matter sprouting forth from the interior of the canals as small protuberances, the foot-stalks of which gradually becoming narrower, they ultimately detach themselves from the parent body, and float about until they again settle down—often in distant localities—where they fix themselves, and form the foundation of new growths. It has, however, been long known that they might also be propagated by division; but not until the series of experiments lately conducted at Pine Key, Florida, has it been practically demonstrated that their artificial cultivation might be commercially successful.

Towards the end of last year, a sponge of 'fine texture and in every respect perfect,' measuring seven inches by eight, was exhibited, which had been grown from a 'planting' some months previously. The planting was conducted in the following manner: From a parent sponge, a series of triangular cuttings were made, through which a stick was inserted, and then stuck in the sand on the sponge-bed near to the shore. All this part of the process was carefully conducted under water, so that the cuttings were never removed from their natural element. In a later series of experiments, equally successful, the cuttings were planted on a rocky bottom, secured by wires, and covered with several inches of mud. Apparently the first operation of nature after the planting is to heal over the fresh-cut surfaces, and this it takes between three and four months to accomplish, after which the growth of the sponge begins; and so rapidly does it grow, that

within other three months, a cutting of about the size of a peach will increase to four and even six inches in diameter. At this rate, a good marketable sponge can be produced within the year. This growth, we may add, contrasts very favourably with those reared naturally, as even under the most favourable circumstances a period of two years at least is required to renew the crop that has been laid bare by the sponge-divers.

We have used the expression here, 'under favourable circumstances,' on purpose, as there are many factors to be considered in the cultivation of the sponge. Aristotle, for example, who was probably the first to subject the sponge to scientific investigation, remarked the differences in their texture, and tried to account for it by stating that 'in general, those which grow in deep and still waters are the softest, for the wind and waves harden sponges, as they do other things that grow, and check their growth.' Aristotle was right in his observation, all the softest and finest sponges being undoubtedly obtained at a depth of from eight to thirty fathoms; but he was probably wrong in deduction, for the tides and waves, as carrying that on which the sponges feed, are necessary for their speedy growth and perfection. In this respect, the experiments at Pine Key were unfortunate, as they had to be performed in shallow water, and in a position where the tides and waves had probably their minimum influence upon them. The disadvantage, however, is one which altogether tells in favour of the experiment; as, with winds and waves and tides favourable, the artificial propagation might be expected to be more rapidly developed still.

Whether the artificial propagation can be conducted in deep waters from which the finer-texture sponges are obtained, remains to be seen; but even admitting failure in this direction, much may be done to compensate for it in the care bestowed upon the cuttings, &c., from which the future sponges are to be reared. Every one knows what can be done by care and selection in the propagating of plants and flowers; and we have no reason whatever to doubt that, with experience, much will also be accomplished with sponges, and that both shape and quality may be developed to a considerable extent. We wish the enterprise every success, not only because there is a prospect of its opening up a new industry, but also because it will likely cheapen a household necessity, which of late has tended to increase greatly in price.

A WONDERFUL INDEX.

ABOUT thirty-five years ago, Mr William F. Poole (now Dr Poole), the present librarian of the Chicago Public Library, took the trouble to prepare an index of the subjects contained in such reviews and periodicals as were accessible in the library of Yale College at that time. This manuscript index proved so useful to the students and readers at Yale, and was so constantly referred to, that, to prevent its being destroyed, it was printed at New York in 1848, as an *Index to Subjects Treated in the Reviews and other Periodicals*. Another edition, containing about six times the matter, appeared in 1853, under the title of *Index to Periodical Literature*. Thus much being accomplished, the editor very

naturally thought his labours were completed in this department, although the succeeding twenty-five years brought repeated requests for a new and fuller edition. At length, in 1876, at the first meeting of the American Library Association, the proposals for a new edition took definite shape; and Dr Poole assumed the responsibilities of editor, being assisted in his work by Mr Fletcher, of Watkinson Library, Hartford. The scheme was carried out with the further assistance of fifty co-operating libraries, only eight of which were British, the rest being American. The result is a handsome and wonderful volume of over fourteen hundred pages, as big as Webster's Dictionary, and entitled *An Index to Periodical Literature* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1882). To show its value, we may say in a word that it is an index to the contents of over two hundred periodicals printed in the English language, from 1802 to 1881 inclusive, and that it gives a key to the contents of over six thousand separate volumes. Such, in brief, is the story of Poole's 'Index to Periodical Literature,' a book which will henceforward be indispensable to every reference library, and save a world of trouble to editors and journalists in hunting up what has already been written upon specific subjects.

Such a work is a splendid testimony to the immense literary activity of the past eighty years, and affords a key to quite an encyclopædia of knowledge. The entries in the Index are the titles of the articles in the various periodicals; volumes of magazines are numbered from their start irrespective of series, but by referring to the 'Chronological Conspectus' at the beginning, we find the years in which the respective volumes were issued. Purely professional and scientific serials do not appear, while several well-known London weeklies are not indexed, owing to a break-down in the arrangements for doing so. But as a hint of the wealth of subjects indexed, we may say that under Women the references to articles fill six closely printed pages; Bible has fifteen pages; Great Britain and France have each over eight pages; Education has about the same space; while the list of articles under Religion occupies about five pages. We notice with satisfaction that *Chambers's Journal* is very well indexed by Dr Poole himself, from 1844 to 1881 inclusive.

The editor does not seem to have found indexing a very paying branch of literary labour, for he says: 'Persons who look for pecuniary reward, should never engage in this kind of work. Up to this time, all the pecuniary reward I have ever had for indexing during these many years can be represented by the American copper coin which will cover one's thumb nail; and yet I have been well paid.' We trust the return from the present edition will be more satisfactory.

A glance at Poole's Index makes plain the necessity for some measure of international copyright. In the list of subjects, where we find a good article appearing in a British magazine, the entries in the Index plainly show the same article transferred to the pages of one or more American magazines, without having benefited the British author or publisher one whit. Dr Poole throws out the suggestion in his preface for an index to books other than periodicals. Whether or not this should ever be

carried out, he has at least laid all those engaged in the business of literature under an immense debt of gratitude, by what he has already accomplished.

RECESSION OF THE FALLS OF NIAGARA.

An interesting bit of information comes to hand regarding the wearing away or recession of these Falls. It will be known to many that, in conformity with recognised geological law, the rocks over which Niagara pours its immense volume are gradually giving way to the pressure and force of the torrent—are being worn down, or broken away in large detached fragments, and this to such a degree that the gradual recession of the cliff forming the fall is distinctly observable by those who periodically take measurements of it. A correspondent, writing to *Nature*, has supplied some information which goes to increase the interest of the subject. He calls attention to the rapidity with which the Canadian side of the fall is deepening its horse-shoe. An immense mass, he says, broke off near the middle of the curve in October 1874, many windows in the adjacent museum being broken by the concussion. Altogether, he finds that in ten years the fall has receded twenty-four feet.

Some interesting calculations might be based on this observation. The gorge below the Falls through which the river passes, extends for seven miles, and the whole of this gorge is believed by geologists to be due to the erosive action by which the Falls have retrograded. Sir Charles Lyell calculated that the rate of recession might be about one foot each year; the rate, however, is practically far from uniform. The upper beds of rock which form the cliff are a hard limestone, extending downwards to about half the depth of the fall. Under this, and extending to the foot of the fall, are soft shaly layers belonging to the same formation; and these soft layers of shale and marl, constantly acted upon by the moisture and spray of the descending waters, are gradually hollowed out, leaving the thick shelf of limestone overhanging. In course of time the edge of the cliff, thus deprived of support, gives way; and on each occasion when this happens, the Falls will be found to have receded so much from their former position. In this way the work of erosion has gone on from year to year, the result being that the river now falls over the rocks at a point seven miles higher up on its course than it must have done at one time. Taking Lyell's estimate of the rate of erosion—one foot a year—we find that a period of nearly thirty-seven thousand years has been required for this cutting out of the gorge. And supposing further that the Falls shall continue to recede—to eat their way backward—at the same rate in the future, then the seventeen miles which lie between them and Lake Erie may be disposed of in other ninety thousand years. If that event should happen in this—to us mortals—very distant future, the level of the lake would be lowered, so that its whole contents would flow down the Niagara river into Lake Ontario; but so large is the body of water which Lake Erie contains, that seven or eight years would, it is calculated, be required in this way to drain it.

FROM MY WINDOW.

An ivy-covered gateway, and beyond
A wilderness of weeds;
Sweet roses droop, and lilies tall despond,
And no one heeds.

The guilder-rose in silence drops its snow,
Its purity unseen;
Tall hollyhocks and sun-flowers bloom and blow
The banks between.

The eglantines untended climb and cling
In fanciful wild ways;
While yearning tendrils passion-flowers fling
Through silent days.

An old stone dial stands 'mid tangled ferns
In solitude supreme—
No mortal heeds, or from its shadow learns
Old Time's grand theme.

A distant pool I see, where tall reeds frown,
And water-lilies smile—
As seasons pass, reeds die, and lilies drown
Unwept the while.

I hear the nightingale pour forth at eve
His passionate sweet strain
Till dawn appears, when other songsters weave
A rich refrain.

But never sound beyond the birds and bees
This wilderness doth own,
Except the sobbing answer from the trees,
To wild wind's moan.

No footfall echoes in this lonely place,
No rippling laughter clear;
No voice resounds, no eager smiling face
Comes ever near.

I, gazing from my window high above
This Paradise so fair,
I daily, hourly, long that some I love
Might wander there.

I people it with children's faces bright,
And laughter-loving eyes;
I see them, eager, pluck the daisies white,
In glad surprise.

While oft, in dreams, I see one Woman sweet,
Through gladsome summer days,
Glide forth in sunshine all the flowers to greet
With love and praise.

I close my eyes, yet feel her dainty feet
The buttercups down press—
I almost hear the nodding daisies beat
Against her dress.

And once, methought, I saw my tender dear—
So mournfully alone—
Whisper soft pleadings in the dial's ear,
To melt its stone.

Ah, loving heart, I too would stay Time's hand
The while we work—and pray—
But what is Time, when in God's better land
Love lives for aye!

FEDORA BELL.

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